

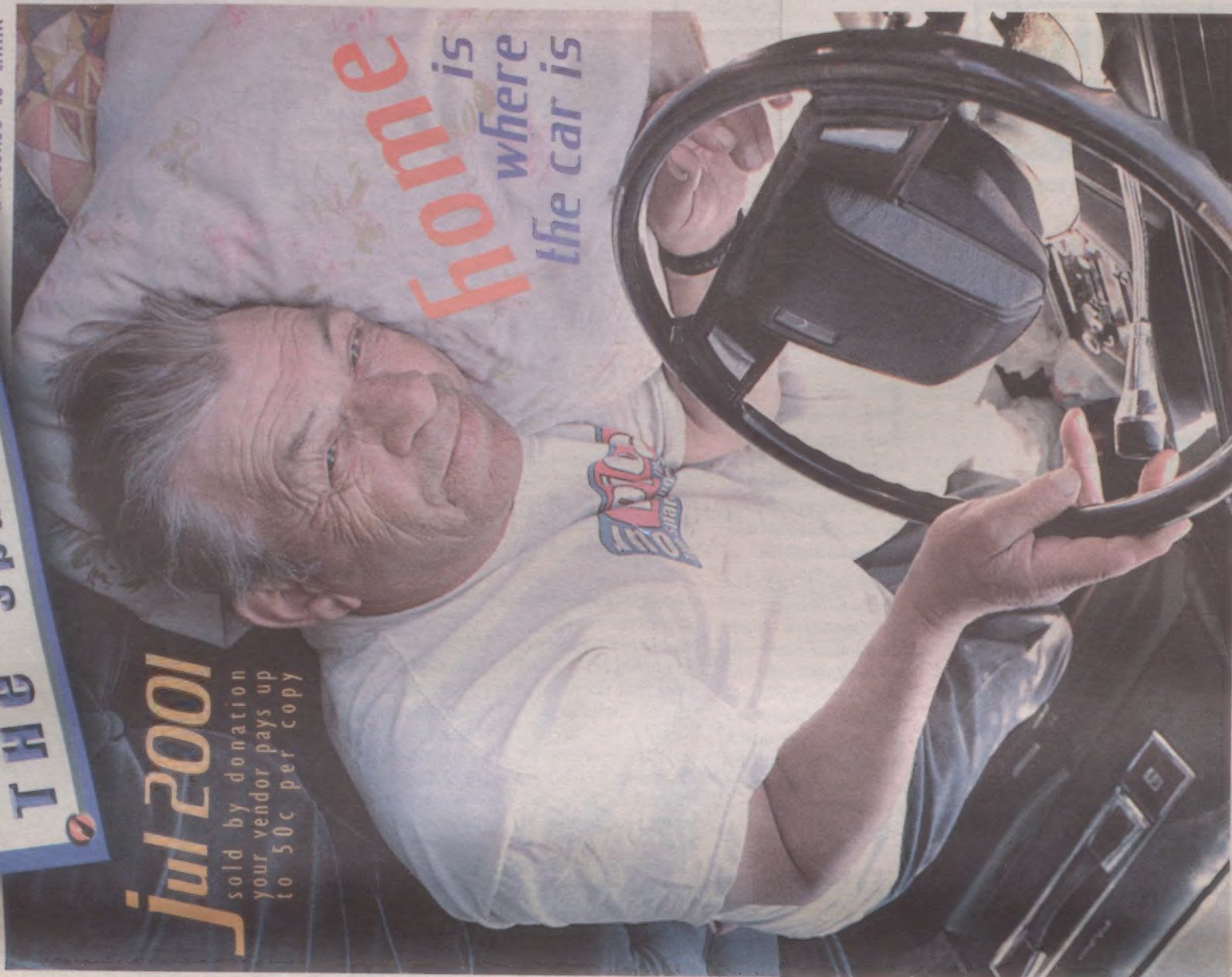
**VOICES**  
THE SPARECHANGE MAGAZINE

a license to think

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<PUBLISHER>  
Bissell Centre, Edmonton

<MANAGING EDITOR>  
Natasha Laurence

<DESIGN & PRODUCTION>  
Pieter de Vos, Jr.

<DISTRIBUTION>  
Ron MacLellan

<PROOF READER>  
Antonio Hyphen-Benedictus

Cover Photo>  
Pieter de Vos, Jr.

## EDITORIAL OFFICES & EDMONTON DISTRIBUTION:

Bissell Centre, 10527-96 Street,  
Edmonton, Alberta, T5H 2H6  
Phone: 423-2285 Ext. 162  
Fax: 429-7008  
Email:  
ourvoice@bissellcentre.org

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# park this

Early in July Edmonton City Council will make a decision that demonstrates whether the intentions of the people who live in a community really count for anything.

The issue is clear. The Alberta government and the Edmonton Police Service want more parking for employees who work out of buildings along 104 Avenue downtown. They have quietly acquired all the land in a large block between 96th and 97th Streets, south of 105A Avenue and want to turn it into a parking lot. The people who live in the neighbourhood where this land is located took part in an exciting and extensive effort several years ago to create an Area Redevelopment Plan that describes how they want land to be used. They said this land is a key piece of the plan and needs to be used for housing and light commercial uses.

City Council accepted the Boyle Street McCauley ARP when the communities presented it. But there is also a technicality in bylaws that some claim would allow park-

ing because the land is near major office buildings. So City Council must now decide to ignore the ARP and the work of community residents, or tell the bodies wanting parking they are out of luck.

In informal meetings, officials with the Alberta government and the city have raised a variety of compromises. These range from not developing the whole area as parking and keeping some of it in grass to letting the community use the parking lot for community events on weekends to having more attractive fencing. But the bylaw amendment City Council will be considering does not include any specific limitations. It would allow the entire area to become parking for more than 400 vehicles.

In a report to City Council from the city's planning department there are three justifications for going ahead. One is that a parking lot is not permanent, and if at some point in the future it was not required the land could then be turned back to the use the community wants.

Another is that the ARP also expressed concern about on-street parking in the neighbourhood and this would reduce that problem. The third is that development of the parking lot would support moving ahead with a multi-use trail along the old railway right-of-way.

None of these "justifications" are significant. Without a specific commitment to a time and space limit on the parking lot, it is meaningless to say in a general way that maybe at some undetermined future time the land could be returned for its intended use. The issue of on-street parking can be dealt with in many ways even now, but the city chooses not to. For example, many of the streets around the police station are kept as free and time unlimited parking and so employees of Edmonton Police Service fill up the streets with their cars. Just putting up No Parking signs or meters could end this. There is good public transportation to the area involved and everyone does not need to drive a personal vehicle to work. And the multi-

use trail? This will be built no matter what use is made of the other land—the two issues have no real connection. The trail is a larger plan that is going to move ahead on its own schedule and it is not legitimate to link it the piece of it across the area involved in this proposal to the parking lot initiative in any way.

This issue is a test of City Council. The neighbourhood involved is home to a lot of people living in poverty or on low incomes. Will there be any effort to respect their own plans for this land or will the wishes of bureaucrats in city and provincial government departments determine what happens? The issue might be specific to McCauley neighbourhood today, but all Edmontonians need to be concerned about what is happening and who gets to call the shots about what life is like in our neighbourhoods. If the idea of approving such a project bothers you, a few calls to City Council members before July 4 might help them to think carefully before they vote.

JIM GURNETT



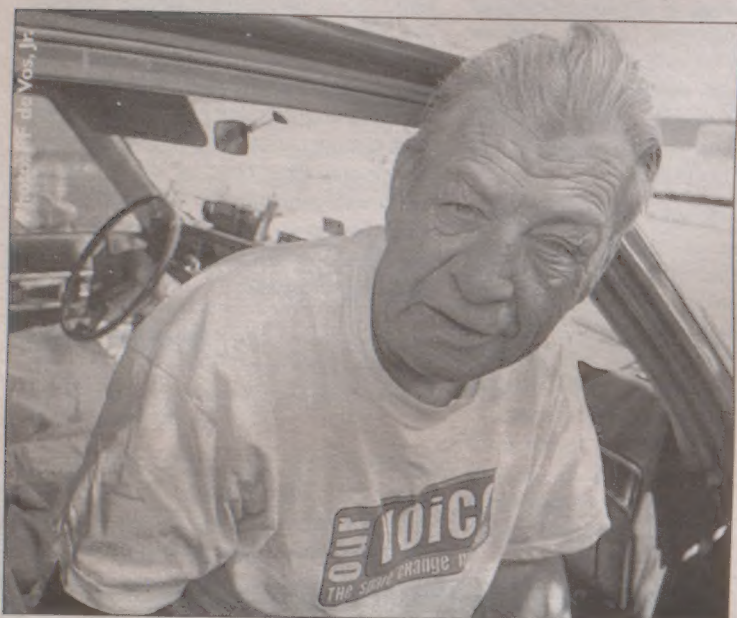
Edmontonians need to be concerned about what is happening and who gets to call the shots about what life is like in our neighbourhoods.

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> july features <



# home is where the car is



The sun sinks slowly in the west. The shadows of downtown office towers lengthen across the used-to-be pool, soon-to-be-World Cafe of Edmonton's City Hall. In the gathering darkness the lights of the World Games billboard countdown each second of anticipation. As night falls we know - the world is coming to Edmonton.

A few blocks away, a tired Reg Taylor opens the door of his room for the night, a 1984 Oldsmobile, and prepares to settle in. He has his belongings in the back seat and trunk, and a bed made up on the front seat. For the seventy-three-year-old pensioner it's better than sleeping in the park.

With the Games approaching, finding a room to rent, difficult at the best of times, has become impossible. Trouble in his last home, a place he refers to as "the morgue", left Reg homeless. This is not an entirely unfamiliar situation for Reg. He has stayed in a number of the "cockroach infested, flea-bitten" inner-city rooming houses and come into

conflict with numerous landlords, but the recent episode went quickly from inconvenience to disaster when he realized he had none but vehicular options.

He has tried all the hotels he knows that rent rooms by the month, but the answer is always

**With the Games approaching finding a room to rent, difficult at the best of times, has become impossible.**

the same: "The Grand - nothing available, the Royal - nothing available, the Klondiker - nothing available, the Cromdale - nothing available, the Jockey - nothing available, the Cecil - nothing available. Maybe in September, they say."

Reg is not the only one feeling the housing strain. Anna has tried seventeen different places, "They look me up and down and say, 'We have nothing for you.' I sleep wherever I can, the park, the Spady, at a friend's...it's crazy."

Jeannie says her landlord gave her five hundred dollars to move out of the one bedroom apartment she had held for a year. "He threw my stuff in the garbage and gave me half an hour to pack. That five hundred dollars, I think it was a bribe. It might have had something to do with complaining about the ants, but I'm not sure." For the time being, she's staying at WEAC, and is not quite sure what she will do next.

People suspect it will only get worse as the countdown continues, but as one man says, "What're you gonna do? They want the money."

Reg, for one, is considering a contingency plan. He would like to insure his room and take it on the road. "I'd rather live in Saskatchewan," he says.

**HOUSING** **H**  
hotel  
health  
homeless  
hypocrisy

## behind the façade ::

By the time the world rolls into Edmonton in August the Lodge Hotel on Jasper Avenue will be ready. Thanks to a \$100,000 grant from the city of Edmonton's Heritage Building Fund and a matching \$100,000 from owner John Toma of JWT Management, both the Hotel and the adjoining Brighton Block will have new store fronts, new front windows and clean brick work.

This is a small comfort to Joyce, her partner and the 48 other tenants who live behind the façade. Joyce is more concerned with the cockroaches, the lack of kitchen facilities, the fact that she has to wash dishes in the sink of the shared bathroom across the hall and the knowledge that she pays \$410 a month for her small run-down room.

Joyce is six months pregnant and her partner is recovering from surgery. The three flights of stairs that separate them from the outside world present a daily nightmare. The couple has lived in the Hotel since last year and Joyce's frustration is obvious.

"We're so isolated in this building. We're arguing every day. I try to keep the place clean, fix it up, but it's hard."

Our conversation is interrupted by a knock on the

door. It's the building manager, his face barely visible behind his long grey hair and beard.

"Who are you?" he asks, "Social workers?"

"I'm not scared of them," Joyce says after he leaves, but she is visibly shaken. "They don't give a shit about the people here," she says, referring to Toma and his son, Junior. "All they're doing is taking advantage of people on welfare."

The \$410 rent for the room that the couple shares is paid directly to JWT management by the provincial government. Most of the rents in the building are paid the same way. Joyce and Mike feel trapped. They can't come up with the damage deposit and references that would allow them to move.

Nick Skippings, an inspector with Capital Region Health, has an extensive file on the Lodge, going back to 1995. In that year the hotel was upgraded to safe housing standards.

The inspectors were back in August of 2000 and the result was a list of necessary upgrades totalling \$600,000 with time to complete the work.

"Capital Health doesn't like to close buildings," Skippings says. "There are fifty suites in the building with fairly hard to house

people. If the building is shut down, they may have no place to live. We would rather work with the landlord than shut down the building. It's a balancing act. People have a right to clean, safe housing, but a place like the Lodge has a lot of older people with significant problems."

But the situation angers Elsie Paul, Aboriginal Resource Worker for the Elizabeth Fry Society. "Why do we allow the slum landlords to get away with this? Why is the government allowing them to live off the avails of poor people? It's totally unacceptable as far as I'm concerned. People come from the suburbs and pick up the girls on the street. They feed on the poor. It's the same thing."

"Social workers should come down and see the places they are sending money to. They should see how people are living." The invitation Elsie issued to Joyce's social worker, however, was politely declined.

As for Toma, he says he's doing the best he can. He had applied for RRAP funding and still hopes that that will come through. Until then he's happy with the Heritage Building Fund money. "By the end of July," he says, "it will look good for the Games."

NATASHA LAURENCE



**"Why do we allow the slum landlords to get away with this? Why is the government allowing them to live off the avails of poor people?"**





# letters to the editor



Letters to the Editor can be mailed to:

> 10527-97 Street,  
> Edmonton, AB  
> T5H 2H6  
> Email: ourvoice@bissellcentre.org  
> Fax: (780) 497-7077

## the spirit of the revolution

I am writing to express my appreciation to both Pieter de Vos and Theresa McBryan for their exceptional contributions to the May 2001 edition of Our Voice. De Vos' photographs of the recent FTAA demonstrations in Quebec City and his accompanying prose reflect perfectly the ambivalence I feel concerning such protests and their ultimate ends.

If revolution is what we're eventually heading toward, I wonder what spirit will guide the revolution? Will it be the spirit that guides rock throwing and billy club beatings? Or will the spirit of the revolution

be such that it can herald, once and for all, an end to in group/out group divisions among people? Our species has a propensity for overlooking our common psycho-spiritual shortcomings. We tend, instead, to assign blame for the results of these shortcomings to one sector of society or another. History has shown the consequences of this folly time and time again. The oppressed replace the oppressors in power, only to become oppressors themselves in some superficially different way. Will the new revolution be yet another testament to this propensity or have we finally cried 'four legs good, two legs baaaaad' for the last time?

I was a participant in the unofficial opening ceremonies of this would be revolution at the 1999 Seattle protests against the

WTO. Imagine marching alongside tens of thousands of people, nearly all of them possessing a single unwavering determination to change the course of history. The experience was inspiring, to say the least. Upon my return to Edmonton, however, I became disillusioned by the realization that many of my fellow activists were simply unwilling or unable to look deeply at the roots of the world's weeds and far too eager just to mow them down by their heads.

Theresa McBryan's article holds more promise. If we, as activists, are aware of some truths that others are not, the best way to open people up to receiving these truths is to threaten these people as little as possible. This is not an easy task, especially if we, too, feel threatened. McBryan speaks

of standing up to the police, yes, but of caring for them too (as if real people existed behind those storm trooper masks). McBryan also talks about 'dancing love', an idea I'm sure many find empty and clichéd, but which I find central and substantial. Expressing ourselves in the spirit of love makes others want to open themselves to us. If we can do this in the heat of the moment with tear gas canisters exploding all around us, we are either crazy or we've come in touch with something far more radical than we'd thought we had. McBryan's words give me hope that the revolution may be on the right track after all.

BRIAN T.F. WELLING

## F FEEDBACK

folly  
f.t.a.a.  
four  
flotsam  
free press

## flotsam + jetsam ::

### if i had a rocket launcher

Are you frustrated by the despicable working conditions endured daily by young workers making your shoes, shirts, and skirts? Are you concerned that increased fossil fuel extraction and consumption will augment Albertan asthma rates? Does the Edmonton Journal's allergy to reporting on the

Gamers can march down the middle of a city street to the beat of loud music, launch a rocket or brick into a storefront window, overturn vehicles, incite rumbles between rival groups and attack bystanders. Extra points can be had by punching out an ATO officer in riot gear, knocking him to the ground and jumping on him!

Conservative government's lack of policy concern for the working poor and disadvantaged in our communities get you depressed about the Free Press? Well kiss that idealistic angst good-bye - your cathartic elixir is here! Rockstar Games and Sony PlayStation2 present State of Emergency, a video game depicting riotous protest against the American Trade Organization (ATO) - the World Trade Organization's aptly-titled fictitious double.

Gamers can march down the middle of a city street to the beat of loud music, launch a rocket or brick into a storefront window, overturn vehicles, incite rumbles between rival groups and attack bystanders. Extra points can be had by punching out an ATO officer in riot gear, knocking him to the ground and jumping on him! Forget teary eyes, vinegar-soaked bandanas, rubber bullets, thwacking truncheons, incarceration, criminal records, months of tedious organizing, rope burn

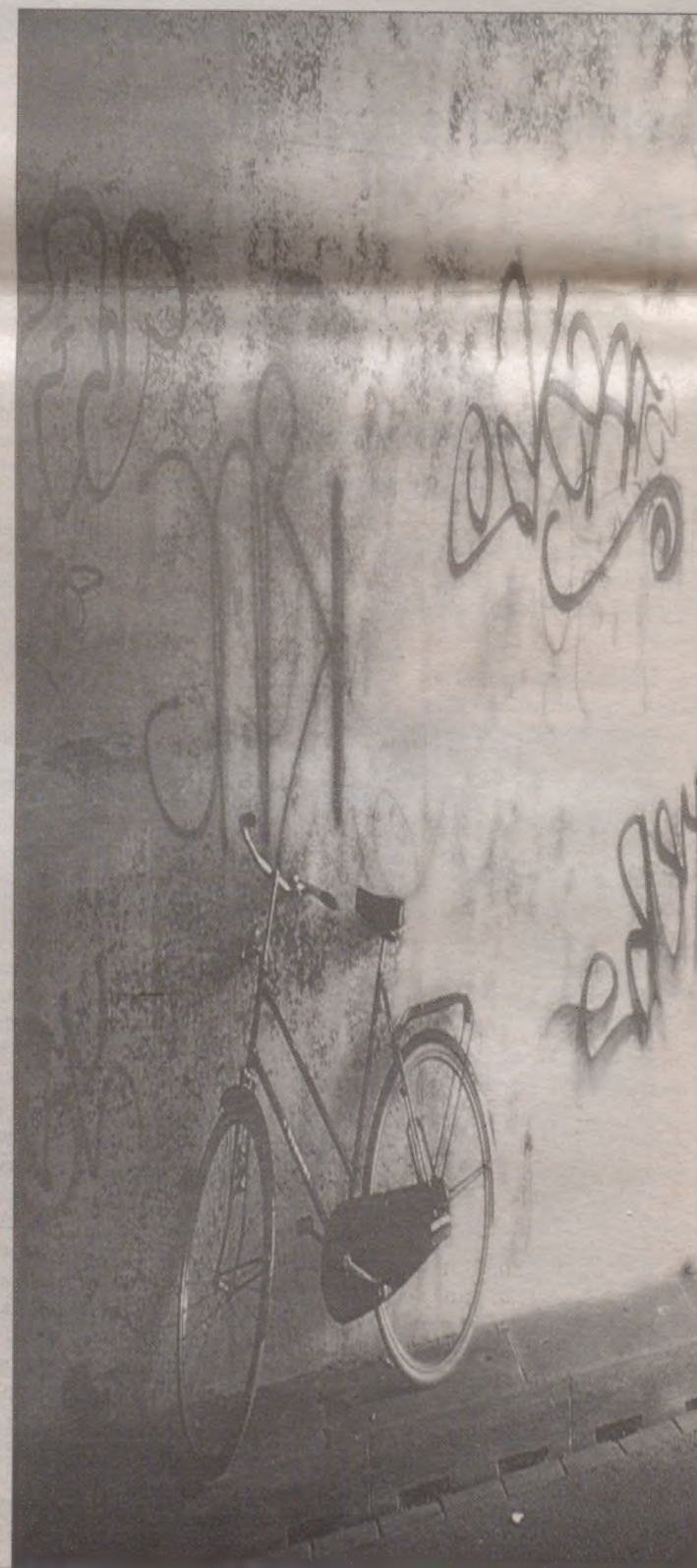
from non-violent direct action training camp, headaches from policy analysis - relax and put your Blood, Sweat, and Tears on ice. Just plug in your Playstation, pop open a Coke, put on some Bruce Cockburn and dance along with your thumbs: "If I had a rocket launcher...Some son of a bitch would die."

### I'm going to Disney Land

The winners of the Sweatshop Retailer Awards, "The Sweaties," were announced on June 18th at a mock ceremony held outside the Metro Toronto Convention Centre. The MTCC is also the site of the Retail Council of Canada's annual conference, where the RCC's "Excellence in Retailing Awards" were presented that same evening. Disney nudged past Wal-Mart in this year's race for the prestigious "Sweatshop Retailer of the Year" award. According to Bob Jeffcott of the Maquila Solidarity Network, which co-sponsored the event with Oxfam Canada, close to 3000 concerned Canadian and transnational consumers voted online, selecting Disney from among four retailers (also incl: Nike, Wal-Mart, Reitman's) most associated with sweatshop abuses over the past year. Disney earned top prize by forcing young women migrant workers making Disney clothes, toys and accessories in Chinese factories, to work up to 16-hour days, six or seven days a week, for wages as low as \$90Cdn a month. Wal-Mart, last year's Sweatshop Retailer of the Year, received this year's "Smokescreen Award" for the company hiding the most from its customers. Ironically, Wal-Mart is also in the running for the Retail Council's award for "Socially Responsible Retailer" of the year. To learn more about the awards, and the ravaging retailers they celebrate, check out:

<http://www.maquillasolidarity.org/awards/index.htm>

JAMES ROWE





# editorial opinion

## so what's the skinny, Clint?

Recently Clint Dunford, Alberta's Minister of Human Resources and Employment, announced the Low Income Review. Apparently he wants Albertans to tell him how poor is too poor or how object should poverty be? It is important that as many people as possible respond to the questionnaire. People in need have waited long enough, but the whole exercise raises so many questions for me.

Before the provincial election the Minister told Our Voice that he has been "lobbied strenuously" on the issue of SFI rates and that it was a matter of "great concern". So why is the Department spending \$400,000 to ask questions they should already know the answer to?

And why are they asking the questions in the month of July, a time of the year when people are the least focused on politics and economics and, I would think, the

least likely to respond to a questionnaire? If you want real answers wouldn't it be better to ask at a time when there is the best chance of getting those answers?

And why is the questionnaire attached to a 25-page government-slanted preamble? Do people need to be coached into the correct response? Can they not think for themselves and makes their own choices?

And why is the questionnaire available only by computer (on the Internet) or by phone? Is the Minister aware that these are two pieces of equipment conspicuously absent in poor households? Does he want to hear from everyone or only the people able to afford the technology?

And why does the survey end with questions about marital status and level of income? Does the value of your response diminish or increase according to how much money you have to live on?



And why is the ad that the department placed in newspapers across Alberta (see center spread) asking for feedback so small and uninteresting? Is it possible they hope no one will notice it? That the time set aside for the review will pass? That the lack of response will justify doing nothing?

Everything about the Low Income Review frustrates me. It triggers my cynicism. It feeds my certainty that this government will do anything to avoid giving peo-

ple in need enough to live on.

But enough about me. The Low Income Review is happening. The government wants to know. Responses are needed. I encourage everyone to participate. This is the time to speak out.

You can get a copy of the questionnaire at [www.gov.ab.ca/hre/lir](http://www.gov.ab.ca/hre/lir), or e-mail [LIR@gov.ab.ca](mailto:LIR@gov.ab.ca) or call 310-445.

NATASHA LAURENCE

### EDITORIAL

E

election  
elephant  
economy  
equipment

## of lions and waterholes

There is an ancient African saying that when the water hole dries up, the animals get meaner. Seven years ago the water hole had dried up and there was insufficient water to go around, so all of the jungle animals agreed to sacrifice their access to water for the good of the jungle community. Some, such as the jackal, laughed at the notion that waterhole was dry, but that is another story.

This led into the seven lean years of drought, and as often happens in such situations, the weakest are the first to be denied and the last to be attended to when things improve. Of course, even the weakest of animals can learn to survive in such times. In the midst of a severe drought in the African savanna, lions have even been seen attacking the huge elephants that were consuming inordinate amounts of water and preventing them from drinking.

At the end of seven years it was said that the waterhole was overflowing once again, and some of the jungle animals wondered if it were not time to ease up on the lions. After all, the jungle was heading into the proverbial seven fat years and there was plenty to go around. But there was grumbling on the part of Gruesome Curmudgeon, who had personally met Darwin on one of his field visits. He wondered out loud if the lions really deserved to share in the new bounty. After all, what good were lions except to lie

around in the sun, annoy other animals, mate and produce baby lions that would grow up to also roar at them from the sidelines? What had they contributed to the jungle economy compared to the majestic elephants that had dedicated themselves to guarding the waterhole for the seven lean years? After all, with all of the water that they had consumed there would surely be a substantial golden trickle available for the lions if they could only learn their place in the jungle hierarchy.

Some of the other animals, however, especially the gazelles, were beginning to mutter among themselves that the jungle was being entirely too selfish, and that it was time to share the new bounty. After all, fair was fair. In addition, life was boring as the increasingly lethargic lions no longer bothered to chase them. The gorillas, meanwhile, had begun to ponder the possibility that the lions might become desperate and attack their fellow animals for their survival.

The bull elephant leader, Trumpeter, was the most finely attuned to jungle news because of his highly-developed ears and he had listened carefully to the emerging controversy. Trumpeter was an elephant to be reckoned with and he was reputed to understand life in the jungle. Wanting to keep the peace within his discordant caucus, Trumpeter called aside his trusted guardian of the waterhole detail, Centurion, and

asked for his views. Centurion opined that there was some discontent among the lions, and he had heard complaints from the odd bleeding heart gazelle about the rigidity of the guard detail, but most of the jungle animals were solidly behind them. Besides, they were too occupied with their own survival to worry about the few mangy lions that had survived the drought.

But Trumpeter had his reputation as a statesman with other jungle leaders to consider, and he wanted to keep the peace in his kingdom. He urged Centurion to consult with all of the animals of the jungle to advise him on the best course of action, cautioning him that to not make the elephants angry by making the waterhole too available, and not alienating the gazelles by being too restrictive. Centurion was to especially ensure that the advice of the friendlies from the lean years be gathered in sheltered glades deep in the jungle far from prying eyes. As for the lions themselves, they could never be allowed to meet, for Trumpeter knew that animals with their backs to the wall that banded together could be a powerful force. It was far safer that they stick to their respective "pride" and remain divided if they were to be subjected to the will of the elephant detail. All went according to plan as the elephant detail consultation conclusively demonstrated that according to all "real jungle animals" and the laws of the jungle, providing greater access to the waterhole

to the lions was not a feasible option. While this may have seemed mean-spirited to the gazelles of the jungle, they were told that if the lions could only be patient they would be showered with a munificent golden trickle from the elephant's abundance in the future. And so it came to be that the jungle was once again seemingly at peace. But the peace was more apparent than real, as the lion leadership took stock of their situation and asked how different things might have been if they had mobilized their "pride" to claim the access to the waterhole that they deserved, and the gazelles planned new ways of bringing the lion's plight to the attention of their fellows. As the word of such activities spread, some animals even had the temerity to challenge the inequity of the law of the jungle. Who knew what all of this might lead to?

**POSTSCRIPT:** There is a seed in Africa whose shell is so thick that it cannot germinate unless it goes through the juices and acids that are specific to the intestinal tract of an elephant. It then produces a beautiful flower. Who knows? Is it possible that a kinder and gentler law of the jungle might germinate as a result of the passage of pain and sorrow of the past few years?

JEAN LEFRANCE,  
MSW, Ph.D., RSW

LeFrance is an Assistant Professor with the University of Calgary, Edmonton Division.





## barbecuing the sacred COW

**C** COMMENTARY

clown  
comic  
cherry  
Canada  
contract  
catalyst

Periods of stress, turmoil, change and upheaval in a person's life offer any individual opportunities for directed personal metamorphosis and growth. By this criteria I have been abundantly blessed lately by situations offering much in the way of potential for change. My computer is frapping out, while I am trying to write a book about Our Voice and put together grant applications for a non-profit for whom I do volunteer work. Both of these tasks have time constraints. I know far less about the inner life of a computer than I do about the far side of the moon, and don't have the money to enlist the services of someone who does.

I have also lost my accommodation on less than ten days' notice. A boarder has substantially fewer options than a primary lease holder. I don't have a waged/salaried job, a credit rating, references, much less additional money for a damage deposit and utility hookups to be able to acquire more conventional housing and a primary lease.

The cherry on top of this sundae is that the Government of Canada is suing me for default of Student Loan payments. I enjoy the irony of all this. Taxpayers' money will be going to

pay three hundred dollar an hour lawyers to bring suit against a soon-to-be homeless (again) woman who sells newspapers on the street.

With all the other stress-inducing factors going on in my life at the moment I actually enjoy the comic relief potential this situation affords. I am glad to report I have found a lawyer with a similar sense of humour and have filed a Statement of Defence against the Justice Department. The Government of Canada will be paying for many of those three hundred dollar hours before this is finished.

Student debt is a big issue for many people. Next month I will be exploring the ramifications of this with people who are in school now, working to have less precarious lifestyles than I do.

For now, since I don't want to reveal my lawyer's strategy prematurely I can only say that he will be testing the legality of that Student Finance contract clause by clause. With any kind of luck, this action will draw attention to the sometimes very onerous burden the high costs of education are placing on people entering or trying to return to the workforce. Any action can be a catalyst for positive social change. It is worth it to me

to try to do something no matter how small. In any event, win or lose, I'm going to have fun with this one. I invite readers and fellow activists to join me. I still haven't figured where to bring in the clowns yet, but with a situation this ridiculous there will have to be clowns.

If anyone would like to get in on the action, maybe for a little street theatre at the courthouse, or would like to offer aid toward Discovery or other court costs, please leave a message for Theresa McBryan, care of Natasha Laurence, Our Voice Editor, at Bissell Centre, 423-2285 ext. 162. The Our Voice email is: ourvoice@bissellcentre.org. By the time this hits the streets I won't have a telephone number of my own anymore; however, if any of you students and grads have any stories you would like to share about the personal costs high tuition fees and student debt loads are exacting on your personal life, you can also drop me a line at P.O. Box 1415, Main Postal Station Edmonton, T5J 2N5.

As the sea captain John Paul Jones said in the aftermath of a disastrous naval encounter "I have just begun to fight."

Theresa McBryan

Because of the shortage of affordable housing, and the difficulty some people have in securing a place to live due to problems with addictions, trouble getting on welfare, or in finding a landlord who will accept them, every abandoned house is occupied almost as soon as the last tenant moves out.

In the inner city, housing looms as a major issue.

There are tenants living in substandard housing, there are rumours of rent gouging in the non-profit sector and there are the slum landlords who have their own unique set of problems. Because of the shortage of affordable housing, and the difficulty some people have in securing a place to live due to problems with addictions, trouble getting on welfare, or in finding a landlord who will accept them, every abandoned house is occupied almost as soon as the last tenant moves out.

This was the case with The Mustard Seed house. I moved out on the first of June because the landlord wanted to do "major renovations". In November, he gave me notice to look for another place. It took six months for me to find suitable housing in the inner city. I finally "lucked out" when I received a phone call from the Central Edmonton Community Land Trust saying they had acquired one more house. After applying, it took a couple of months to get accepted.

I moved out of the old place on the first of June. Before I left, I turned off the water and the lights, then made sure all the doors were secured.

Ten days later, Wally, my former landlord came by. He had lost his key. Luckily, I still had one.

He said the floor layers

were coming in to replace carpets and linoleum that afternoon. He left, but within minutes, however, he was on the phone.

"Linda," he said. "Did you leave a bunch of stuff in the house? And there are two bicycles on the front porch."

"No," I said, "What kind of stuff?" Maybe he was referring to the furniture that had been there before I moved in. I didn't take that.

"Well, there's a litter box, and a kitten, a computer, a TV set, VCR, - all kinds of things. Could you get down here and see if you recognize any of it?"

I drove over, and walked in the open door. It looked like he had new tenants. There was even women's make-up and a prescription for medicine for some fellow named Peter and a pile of suitcases. But none of the things were mine.

The landlord called the Sheriff on his cell phone. He was getting edgy. The floor layers were due within the hour.

As he waited around, a young couple came from The Mustard Seed where they had gone for their noon meal. They told Wally that a woman named "Muriel" said she was the landlady. She rented them the main floor suite for \$500 a month. They had a rent confirmation to take to the Social Services the next day.



## squatters in residence

Wally told them they couldn't stay, but they could store their stuff in the garage. He even put a padlock on the garage door for safety.

That same evening, as I drove home from the Inner-city Mission, I stopped by the house. The whole lower half of the garage door had been kicked in, and there was a group of people sitting on a mattress inside, drinking beer. They had been living there for the past ten days, and, when they found their door padlocked, had simply kicked their way in.

I called Wally to tell him he had more tenants - this time in the garage.

Not long afterwards, he called back to thank me. He said, "We had a really exciting time down here. The police came, and the guys didn't want to leave. They even pepper sprayed one of them - a blind guy, and he was kicking up a storm inside the paddy wagon when they drove off."

I walked by the following day, and noticed that Wally had pounded a board over the entrance to the garage. But it's probably only a matter of days until he has more "tenants".

Linda Dumont



# when the games come to town

They're coming. Like dark clouds gathering on the horizon on an apparently calm summer day, the World Track and Field Games are looming. We can see them in the distance gathering strength, rumbling ominously. What will they mean to the people in the inner city?

Like meteorologists we can only make predictions, partially based on what has happened in other parts of the world in similar conditions: the street-sweeps before the Olympics in Atlanta and Sydney, the housing crisis with the '88 Calgary Olympics (Hold on to Your Shorts, The Games Are Coming, Our Voice, Sept. 2000). And partially based on demographic and geographic information: the Commonwealth Stadium, the main venue for the Games, is separated from downtown Edmonton and the World's Café by that traditionally ignored slice of municipality, the inner city. We will have an anticipated 250,000 visitors walking through, parking and sightseeing in the one area of the city voted most likely to be embarrassing. This is where the people least wanted in any other part of town live. AND IT'S RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE GAMES! Demographically and geographically it spells trouble.

There is speculation that the police have planned ahead, handing out tickets they know won't be paid, so that when the time comes, all arrests will be justified. There is speculation about contingency plans by Alberta Human Resources and Employment for emergency shelter space. No one who knows is talking. And the ones who need to know can only predict.

Our Voice has its own contingency plan. We have a list of people who are prepared, after the fact, to answer the question: "So what happened to you when the Games came to town?" (see the September issue.)

NATASHA LAURENCE

## so what's gonna happen?

"Every business, every individual is going to tap into the money that's there. What I've seen in other places is the police forces do a sweep. In Victoria a certain area was cordoned off and people were physically removed. Some ID checks will have outstanding warrants, then you're in jail. We can expect an inordinate number of ID checks."



< sean >

"The cops told us working girls that we had to stay on 103 Ave. and 96 St. during the Games. There's 70 of us. How are we supposed to manage that? I think a lot of people will be spending the time in jail."



< anna >

"I've heard the Mustard Seed is closed at the end of June until September. Are they trying to make this place look good?"



< ben >

"Rents will triple, prostitution will triple, drug dealers will make money. There'll be no place to stay."



< ravi >

"I have no idea."



< bruce >

### PREDICTIONS

P

plan  
police  
people  
physically



# A ATTITUDE

affect  
anger  
alcohol  
assistance  
acceptable

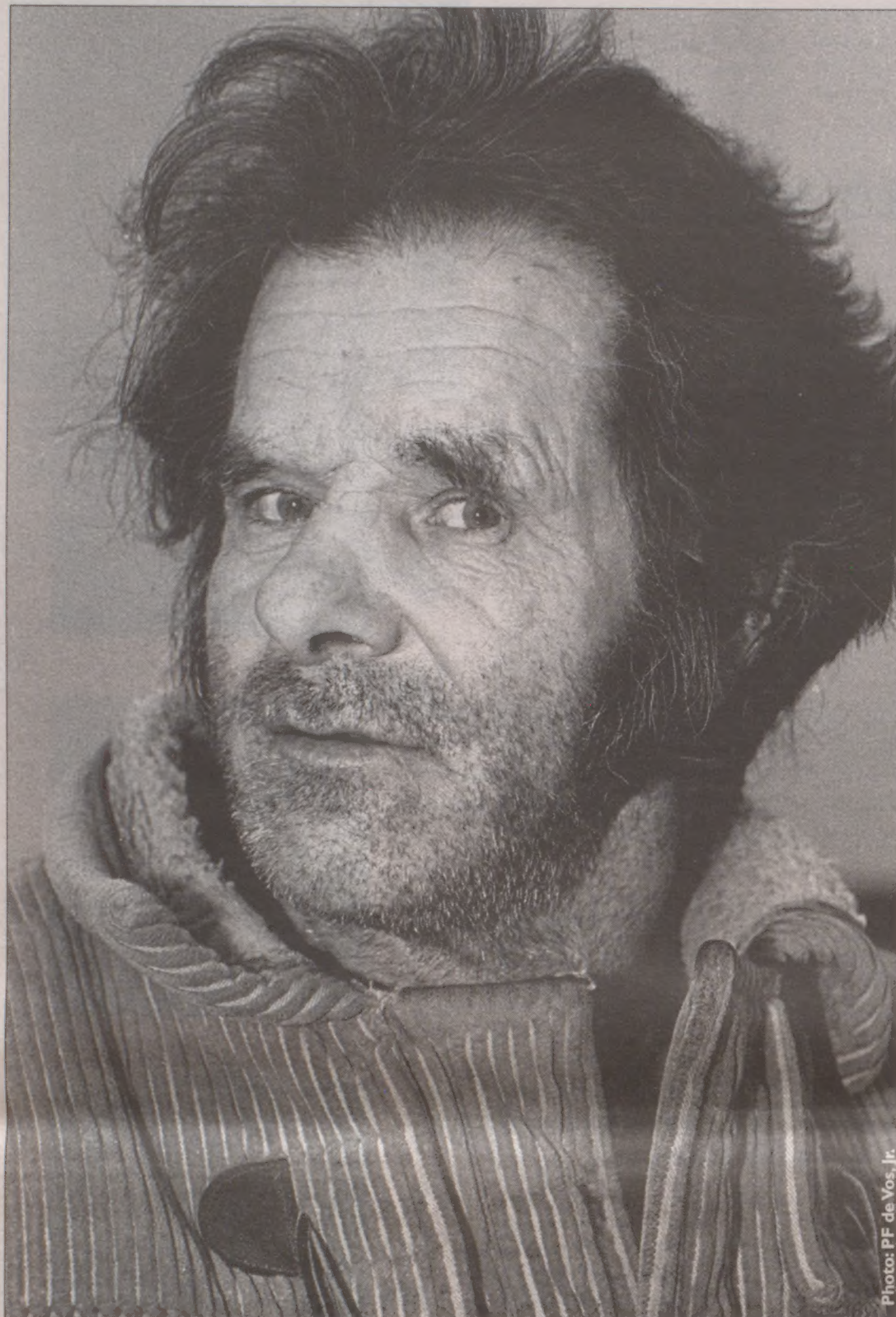


Photo: PF de Vos, Jr.

## the tip of the iceberg

The reason I say that homelessness is just the tip of the iceberg is there's a whole lot of underlying issues.

When you're not feeling good in your psyche, when you have a lot of pain, whatever, in your life, you're not about to make a home your top priority because all this drags you down...it affects you.

Homelessness is just the tip of the iceberg. We can talk all about homelessness but if we don't have an idea what it's about... it's good that people want to do something and be involved, but we need to go a little extra mile with that. We need to be visiting the people who are actually homeless to see what it really is that they're going through.

I've never been homeless like the people on the street, per se, but I ended up without a home when I was in the first year of my social work program. I ended up with \$231 a month and with my groceries and my transportation.... I applied for my Assistance and I ended up with \$231 a month. I couldn't get any more and I didn't have my family with me.

After I had been in social work for a while, I gave up my kids to my ex-husband because I had a night placement. I was getting home late and I found out my kids were running around late at

night. I had mom right across the street and my sister next to me. We were like little Hutterites...they were the ones who had committed themselves to look after my kids when I was in this night placement. It's not like I was leaving my kids alone. They were big kids 11, 12 and 13. You know kids that age, after they put them to bed they were wandering off outside again. In the summertime it's daylight for a long time. They couldn't see going to bed at 8:30 anymore, without the mom being around, so they took advantage of going outside and playing. So I asked my ex-husband to take them for awhile.

That's how I ended up being by myself. And I didn't realize at the same time I was grieving for the children. I was totally ripped away from what my life was like. I was trying to get educated, trying to get through the social work program. For the first time I was alone again.

My bed was down in the basement of my sister's house. It wasn't even a room; it was just a basement. The washing machine was there, kids running around upstairs...and then trying to do my homework. It was really hard and it got worse and worse and worse.

I had friends who were so accommodating, giving me keys - 'Any time you want to come to my house, feel free to come,' but then I felt like I was really imposing. It wasn't the same.

I was basically getting more and more unhappy and more and more depressed. It's another form of homelessness. You have nowhere to hang your hat or lay your head comfortably because it's somebody else's pillow, not yours. Or somebody else's fridge not yours.

I wanted to quit, I was so depressed. I thought - 'What's wrong with me? I'm supposed to be a social worker, a professional person and here I am getting more and more depressed.' I didn't know what was wrong with me.

The reason I say that homelessness is just the tip of the iceberg is there's a whole lot of underlying issues. When you're not feeling good in your psyche, when you have a lot of pain, whatever, in your life, you're not about to make a home your top priority because all this drags you down...it affects you.

You may have issues with alcohol and drugs, sexual abuse, cultural and family breakdown, trauma from childhood. We have all these people now not focusing on homelessness, to make that the top priority, because there's so much pain, hurt and anger in their life. When you're feeling good and functional you focus a lot on making a home for yourself - that's

important to you. And I'm not saying that it's not important to the people that are homeless, but they have a lot of issues.

So if we look at homelessness, we ought to be looking at what's underneath homelessness and start pumping dollars in their...programmes in the way of helping you heal yourself. We are, especially First Nations people, living like a third world country here. There's no excuse for it. We're First Nations, we should have a place to hang our hat, where we feel comfortable and safe. We don't have that because of a lot of those issues we have. They get in the way.

If I'm functional right now and I feel good, emotionally, spiritually, physically, I make my home a top priority.

At one time, when I wasn't there, when I was really unhappy, that wasn't my top priority. Those other things hindered me. I'm a recovering alcoholic. When I was drinking and drugging there were many times I was homeless or living in a home that was not acceptable...living in a place that was deplorable housing. I didn't have the self-esteem to get a better place for me and my children. I didn't feel I was worth it. I couldn't tackle discrimination, for example.

So we have a lot of people who feel so vulnerable, they can't fight those barriers. We can't just be developing houses; we need to heal the spirit. People need to feel good about themselves, and have dreams and hopes.

### ELSIE PAUL

Elsie Paul is the Aboriginal Resource Worker at the Elizabeth Fry Society

She sits on the Edmonton Committee on Homelessness





## parenting with strength

In 1999, Bissell Centre, in collaboration with Sam and Shirley Shirt, held a traditional parenting program called Parenting With Strength. The program was modeled after a traditional parenting program developed by The Skokum Jim Friendship Centre in Whitehorse, Yukon. It ran for several months, and although successful, it was felt to be too short. Late in 2000, Bissell Centre received funding to re-establish a parenting program. The main financial supporters of the new program are The United Church Healing Fund and the Edmonton Community Adult Learning Association (ECALA).

The Parenting With Strength program operates

under the Future for Families Department, which is managed by Lisa Cottrell. Curtis Grosco - Program Coordinator, and Enole Tapaquon - Co-facilitator, will implement and deliver the new program to families. Curtis and Enole are recent graduates of the Social Work program at Grant MacEwan College. Enole has previous experience working with families and facilitating cultural workshops. She also brings a richness of personal experiences to the program. Curtis draws on his experiences with the Community Justice and Child Welfare systems in the Northwest Territories. He also has worked with men who use violence or abuse.

The Future for Families Department recognizes that parents are the first, and most important, teachers of children. The primary objective of Parenting With Strength is to promote positive family skills that will enable children to survive and thrive as they reach adulthood. Embedded in this main objective are small incremental steps. Through the process of this program, it is hoped to enhance family health and development, enrich parent/child interaction, and prevent neglect and abuse.

The process is to focus on the well-being of parents. This begins with a four-day, intensive workshop in a wilderness setting. The participants will look at how they negotiate their family relationships through the four aspects of their being (mind, body, emotions and spirit). This will be addressed through morning sessions with facilitators and afternoons with Native Elders. In the morning group sessions, participants will be presented with information and then have the opportunity to share experiences as it relates to and makes sense in their families.

The Elders will then continue a dialogue with participants on the same theme. Storytelling, rituals, and ceremonies may be used. The emphasis will be on a holistic approach to self-care through the wisdom and experiences of the Native Elders. Elders' teach-

ings, complemented by morning sessions with facilitators, should be engaging and relevant to the families who are participating. It is hoped that through this process parents can find meaning in past events and experiences while seeing the possibilities of creating alternatives to the old stories in their lives.

The next step in the process will involve eight two-hour sessions on topics generated by the participants. These will involve concrete parenting skills for the participants to put into practice. These sessions may be on topics as diverse as what to do with a colicky baby to traditional native ways of disciplining children. The third phase involves facilitators working with families at home, or office visits. The facilitators, in collaboration with the families, will help to integrate the new skills and behaviors into family life and relationships.

CURTIS GROSCO

The dates for the four-day workshops are as follows: June 18th to June 21st, July 9th to July 12th, and August 9th to August 12th. These workshops are held at Moonlight Bay Camp on Lake Wabamun. The families are provided with transportation to and from camp. Parents are encouraged to bring their children as daycare is provided while attending the workshops. The weekly sessions will be held at Bissell Centre with daycare also provided. For anyone interested in more information, they can contact Curtis at 423-2285, extension 145.

### STRENGTH S

skills  
spirit  
stories  
self-care

## social debt in Alberta

Alberta Human Resources and Employment has many well-kept secrets. Overpayments are the best-kept secret of all. The Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) program has an overpayment clause in Section 9. Section 6 of the Supports for Independence Policy Manual contains overpayment procedures. An overpayment clause is found in Section 3 of the Income Support Recovery Act. This abundance of legislation is ample evidence of the provincial preoccupation with overpayments. It is an obsession.

An overpayment is almost anything your worker says it is. It is quite common for people on assistance in Alberta to receive a debt notice for hundreds, often thousands of dollars without notice or explanation. An accounting is seldom given and clients are rarely advised of their right to appeal their worker's decision. Often, these decisions are arbitrary and groundless.

The 1997 - 1998 Annual Report of Human Resources states: "the department's error control program identified savings of \$3 mil-

lion. These overpayments were identified through file reviews and home visits." In 1996-97, the same amount was identified using the same means. Additional measures include Fraud Investigation, Eligibility Reviews, and Error Detection and Correction. Most of these "savings" manifest themselves as client debt. Is Alberta Human Resources seizing \$3 million a year from our most impoverished citizens? It would appear so.

Disabled workers on AISH are the most aggrieved about overpayments. Every penny of their Canada Pension Disability allowance is seized, including a hefty portion of the generous lump sum payment. It is quite common for disabled workers to find themselves thousands of dollars in debt to AISH. Disabled workers surrender more than \$26 million a year to AISH. Injured workers on SFI (welfare) are allowed to keep the entire CPP lump sum payment. Why the discrepancy?

The pursuit of overpayments is relentless. Everyone is suspect. There is no assumption of innocence in the Alberta assistance system. This is a violation of human and legal rights. Applicants for assistance are subjected to a rigorous means test. Persons on SFI

must submit an intrusive monthly report. Those on AISH must complete an invasive, 4-page annual report which contains only 4 questions on health. In addition, clients must be prepared to submit financial documents and statements at a moment's notice or lose their benefits. One never knows when the next demand, threat or debt notice is coming. If reports, documents and statements are deemed insufficient, the client receives a home visit. The police need a search warrant to come into your house and need reasonable grounds to get one. Human Resources do not. The overpayment clauses give Human Resources more sweeping powers than the police.

No overpayment is too insignificant for Human Resources. Cheques have been adjusted to "recover" .32 cents a month. Human Resources will stoop to recovering \$1.00 per month but the most common payment is \$80.00 a month. One payment of \$200.00 a month has been reported. A sharp drop in income triggered a catastrophic chain of events for this client. He is now permanently incarcerated in Alberta Hospital. In fairness to Human Resources, the amount paid monthly can be negotiated and the

debt can be appealed. Debtors are seldom, if ever, advised of these rights.

Failure to disclose income or assets could result in loss of benefits, a \$1,000 fine or imprisonment. Civil libertarians call this "terror legislation." Its sole purpose is to intimidate the poor. Debt notices are frequently accompanied by the threat of a collection agency. Human Resources can and does take debtors to court. When people are convicted of welfare fraud, 80% of them receive jail time while only 4% of those convicted of tax fraud go to prison. Detection of overpayments depends upon a complex web of workers, assessors and supervisors. Whole branches of Human Resources are devoted to overpayments. How much does all this surveillance cost? For the record, a 1997 report on the incidence of welfare fraud in Alberta puts the rate of welfare abuse at 0.05%.

The Alberta Human Rights Commission, the Canadian Human Rights Commission and the United Nations Human Rights Commission all claim their hands are tied by the Alberta overpayment clause. A Winnipeg epileptic, Jim Finlay, took the Manitoba overpayment clauses all the way to the

Supreme Court. He was defeated by a vote of 5 to 4. All the women voted to repeal the clauses; all the men voted to uphold them. Unless immediate measures are taken to curb the ongoing, institutionalized abuses of these clauses, then they ought to be repealed.

There are better ways to deliver assistance. The Canada Pension Disability program does not review files, set asset thresholds, seize income, make threats, enter homes or quibble over nickels and dimes in overpayments. This program is administered, nation-wide, by a 1-800 number. It is time for assistance in Alberta to be re-tooled along the lines of cost-effective, non-intrusive CPP disability programs. Better yet, bring in a Guaranteed Annual Income and eliminate "self-serving bureaucrats and their stifling red tape." A GAI has been in place in many European countries for decades.

There is an impenetrable wall of media silence around social assistance issues in general and overpayments specifically. It is time to stand up and speak out.

ISABELLE FOORD



# A Low Income

## SFI amounts don't meet even the most basic needs of families

"I water down the milk so that one glass makes three."

"Not enough money for food and basic necessities such as diapers and formula"

"You ask why so many women go back (to abusive relationships). We can take the abuse but we don't want our children to do without."

"My kids always eat first. I don't care if I go two or three days without anything to eat."

## SFI amounts don't allow people to break out of the poverty cycle

\$906 a month does not allow a single mother with two kids any flexibility to attend educational, counseling or other programs that may allow her to move off welfare.

## There are many misconceptions about welfare recipients

### The reality: in Alberta in 1997:

45% of SFI recipients were children

72% of SFI kids lived in single-parent families

Women headed most of the single-parent families

Most SFI families had only 1 or 2 kids

Most SFI case heads were in their 20's - 40's

Most SFI recipients lived in cities and the vast majority lived in rental housing

60% of SFI cases were on SFI for job reasons

## The current and future costs to Alberta of child poverty are high.

### 1 in 5 Alberta children are at risk

#### Economic costs include costs to:

- Health Care
- Education
- Social Service
- Employment Insurance
- Justice System
- Lost Taxes and Productivity

## The impact of poverty on children can be profound

### Poor children are at greater risk for:

- Hunger and poor nutrition
- Poor health
- Psychological problems
- Learning difficulties
- Poor achievement in school
- Difficulties with the law

### The risk increases as family income declines.

### For children in poverty:

- Infant death rate is 2x higher
- Death rates are 10x higher for accidents, suicides & homicides
- Childhood disability is 2x higher
- High school dropout is 2.5x higher



# ome Review



Photo: PF de Vos, Jr.

## Why we cannot afford NOT to address this issue

The greater the poverty today, the larger the economic and social costs tomorrow.

It has been estimated that \$1 spent on children's welfare saves \$7 in future justice, health and social services costs.

What burden are we creating for future generations if we fail to address this issue of intergenerational poverty

## Why addressing this issue is affordable.

- An average monthly SFI increase of \$200 for a caseload of 300,00 would cost \$72 million or 0.41% of the estimated 2000-2001 provincial spending of \$17.7 billion.
- Alberta is prospering
- The deficit is gone and the debt is being repaid
- Alberta's taxes are the lowest in Canada
- Alberta's revenue base has diversified
- Employment is high
- Oil and gas prices are generating revenue for the province

## TELL US HOW TO IMPROVE LOW-INCOME PROGRAMS.

You can pick up a copy of the discussion guide and questionnaire "Extending the Alberta Advantage" at:

- MLA constituency offices
- offices of Alberta Human Resources and Employment
- Canada/Alberta Service Centres
- Family and Community Support Services or Child and Family Services Authority offices

You can order a copy of the guide by calling 310-4455, or on-line at [www.gov.ab.ca/hre/lir](http://www.gov.ab.ca/hre/lir)

You can also send a written submission: in the postage pre-paid envelope with the guide

- to fax # (780) 415-9299 (toll-free dial 310-0000)
- to [lir@gov.ab.ca](mailto:lir@gov.ab.ca)
- to MLA Committee to Review Low-Income Programs, 10808-99 Ave. Edm. AB. T5K 0G5



### MLA COMMITTEE TO REVIEW LOW-INCOME PROGRAMS

Thomas A. Lukaszuk, MLA  
Edmonton - Castle Downs

Alma DeLong, MLA  
Calgary - Bow

Bryce Jacobs, MLA  
Calgary - Taber - Warner

Gary Masys, MLA  
Edmonton - Norwood

Moe Amery, MLA  
Calgary - East

## Current and future cost to Alberta of child poverty

- A week in neo-natal intensive care: \$8,400
- 1 year of child welfare services: \$2,300
- 1 year of group home care: \$36,500

The cost to Canada of 137,000 Canadian youth who dropped out of school in 1994 is estimated at \$4 billion in taxes and social costs

The cost to government of 1 troubled youth who is raised in a troubled family is estimated at \$500,000 +



## B BETRAYAL

banning  
by-laws  
budget  
buskers



There is throughout North America a consistent pattern of harassing the poor, the homeless, the vagrants, the panhandlers and the squeegee kids through what I call the "privatization of public space" and "banning by-laws" (anti-loitering, anti-panhandling and anti-squeegee).

Everyday, as I head east down Portage Avenue, what do I see at the Broadway/Portage intersection? Squeegee kids! These kids approach each car stopped at the red light and politely ask if they would like their windshields cleaned, and willing drivers pay them something for their trouble.

Recently, I went to Robin's Doughnuts for coffee, across the street from where the squeegee kids were hard at work. There I discovered a kid with his squeegee mop and pail on the floor beside him sitting on a stool across from a Winnipeg policeman! Obviously, they saw each other, and obviously the policeman saw the squeegeeing activity across the street.

Curious, I asked the policeman why he wasn't enforcing the squeegee by-law? His answer: "If I don't see them, I can't enforce it." Although he did indicate that such a by-law was "useful to have on the books", he said that he thought that squeegeeing was a good entrepreneurial activity for young people - one that was better than panhandling or social assistance.

The squeegee kid told me that there were approximately 20 squeegee kids working in Winnipeg (outside the Osborne area). That's as many working illegally today as there were before the "ban". He also said he makes about \$60 per day! That's a lot more than some people make in a day, and they're providing a service, too!

## a powerhouse betrayal

In exchange for the 'Squeegee By-Law' banning squeegee kids the City of Winnipeg initiated Powerhouse, a multi-use opportunity centre for youth. 'Powerhouse Project' under the leadership of Professor Gordon Reeve of the University of Manitoba was to be developed at 409 Mulvey Street a vacant, 50,000 square foot former brewery on a secluded stretch of the Red River.

Powerhouse Project was to provide a multi-use facility to assist street youth in meeting basic needs, entrepreneurship training, and personal development. It was to address safety issues of 'at risk' youth, residents and business in Osborne Village.

The City approved a \$40,000 grant for Powerhouse to do a feasibility study to convert the old brewery into a unique youth centre. Reeve, an art professor at the University of Manitoba, indicated that the study would take about 6 months. To be included in this 50,000 square foot centre was Operation Go Home (reuniting street kids with their family), McDonald Youth Services/S.K.Y. (a short-term hostel for street kids), Literacy Partners, Health Affiliate (with nursing and medical programs from U of M providing staffing), a commercial rooftop restaurant, Odd Jobs For Kids Centre, and a Squeegee Co-op which would make and sell articles on consignment. As well, there was to be a Seniors Multi-Purpose Room for area residents, a "Buskers' Union office, and a coffee shop/drop-in in the cellar of the building.

But two years after the fact, no one at City Hall knew where the feasibility study was. Even more surprising was that it never went to City Council or Executive Policy Committee for debate and approval. One copy was filed with the W.E.D. where it has been gathering dust for over 2 years.

The original Brewery Powerhouse Assessment Feasibility Study and business plan prepared by Martin Itzkol and Linda Kutcher in October and November of 1999, as well as the Prairie Architects capital development plan for Powerhouse Youth Village in December 1999, indicates doing Phase I of this project (workshops and offices) would cost \$250,000. Redevelopment of the main floor would cost \$1,045,000, and the redevelopment of the upper and basement floors came in at \$1,580,000. At a total cost of \$2,875,000, this may be why they didn't go to the City to ask for the funds.

So, what happened? They asked Dudley Thompson of Prairie Architects to do yet another feasibility study on the Schmecker's building to determine whether it

was suitable for development of a Powerhouse Village. It wasn't. The ambitious Powerhouse Project was allowed to shrink to its present form, a holding action called Powerhouse (a drop-in centre).

In spite of all these failures to develop a comprehensive plan to encompass all aspects needed to deal with street kids, Powerhouse has somehow succeeded in receiving approximately \$450,000 from all three levels of government, with little or no results.

Powerhouse has had 2 lawsuits filed against them over the last 2 years due to the ineptitude of the Board of Directors there. Carol Barton, former Executive Director, has recently been terminated for 'just cause' (though she has not been informed of the 'just cause'). Ms. Barton has never had an evaluation, nor did she have a job description. The Board Chairperson is not adhering to by-laws or the Employee/Personnel and Procedure manual. The Outreach Workers are unable to provide services due to lack of direction and lack of funds to provide emergency services. Constant staff and board turnover (only one board member remains from the original Board of Directors) is extremely detrimental to the operation of organizations such as Powerhouse.

The Youth Advisory Committee is not allowed to communicate with members of the Board. Why? There also appears to be a conflict of interest for Martin Itzkow who is now serving as Acting Director of Powerhouse. He has been paid on an ongoing basis as a consultant conducting several assessments for Powerhouse.

Finally, Powerhouse's Operating Budget for 2000-2001 indicates that they received \$48,218.55 from the Government of Canada and \$149,301.42 from the Province of Manitoba for a total revenue of \$201,967.99. Out of that, salaries and benefits totaled \$126,635.70! Office operations totaled \$24,393.00, staff expenses of \$1,100.00, professional fees (includes consultation) of \$9,200.10, consultant fees of \$1,070.00 and an architectural study totaling \$2,196.41. Furthermore, there were Board expenses of \$8,735.90. Total amounts spent on programs (services to street kids) was \$39,550.00. What does this show? That this was a job creation for professionals and no help was given to those who needed it - the street kids.

NICK TERNETTE  
ROD GRAHAM

Nick Ternette is a community and political activist, freelance writer and broadcaster. Rod Graham is a freelance writer.





## Mediation Training to Improve Police Social Interaction Skills

The February shooting death of an unarmed West African immigrant, Amadou Diallo, in a hail of 41 bullets fired by four white New York City Police (NYPD) has focused attention on mistreatment of people of color by police not only in New York but throughout the United States. The shooting prompted daily protests in front of NYPD headquarters at which more than 1000 people were arrested. Although the protests ended when the officers were indicted for second degree murder in late March, attention on the shooting has not ceded. The Attorney-General for the State of New York and the United States Commission on Civil Rights are conducting an inquiry of the Diallo tragedy and the many complaints of racially motivated policing by New York City Police officers.

The Diallo tragedy has spawned a variety of NYPD initiatives to prevent a similar re-occurrence. These include efforts to recruit African-Americans and Latinos into NYPD ranks and naming an African-American to head the specialized police unit to which the four officers who shot Diallo belonged. Another initiative is of interest to dispute resolution professionals: that of providing officers with wallet-size, palm cards which instruct them to behave politely. For example, the cards urge officers to say "hello," "please," "thank you, sir" and "ma'am" among other socially acceptable terms.

The palm cards go on further to urge cops to, "Respect each indi-

vidual, his or her cultural identity, customs and beliefs." Not long after issuing the cards, the NYPD will print and distribute to civilians a 24-page booklet/ brochure entitled *Your Rights and Responsibilities When Interacting with the Police*. Both the palm cards and brochures are in response to the Diallo tragedy-- a fiery shooting that has turned attention to the social interaction skills of police officers.

### Role for Dispute Resolution

Dispute resolution professionals can help alleviate the problem of negative police-citizen interaction where the officer's social skills are at fault. This can be done provided that an officer does not have other serious shortcomings (i.e., harbors racist views or employs a "John Wayne" style of policing).

At a minimum, dispute resolution professionals can administer social interaction training workshops to patrol police officers. Training of this type would incorporate mediation skills such as use of "I" messages, introspection, active listening, and cognizance of one's own body language.

I train patrol police officers not only about mediation but also to become mediators. After all, patrol police officers encounter countless interpersonal disputes. Handling these disputes requires social interaction expertise on the part of the police officer. Notwithstanding that etiquette, diversity, and sensitivity training absolutely contribute to this expertise, let us consider the potential contribution of mediation training.

There is a distinction between a patrol police officer receiving training that enables him/her to refer a dispute to a mediation center and a police officer receiving training which will enable him/her to function as a mediator. The latter training will best insure that the officer is given skills to reduce the likelihood that a call-for-service/scene will escalate. These interpersonal

social skills will help an officer interact with disputants in such a way that the situation does not become worse (e.g., violent) because of actions by the officer (i.e., via an officer's poor body language). In this way, it is less likely that someone (citizen or officer) is injured or dissatisfied with the police response.

### Relation to Community Policing

Consider that community policing champions citizen empowerment. It attempts to do away with notions that the police are an occupying army and that citizens have little say in the policing of their communities. New York City's troubles, as well as other jurisdictions, are in many ways rooted in the police department's unwillingness to tap communities as resources in maintaining order.

If patrol police officers interact with citizens using mediation skills and address interpersonal disputes (which are amenable to mediation) using mediation, many of the objectives of community policing are realized. Mediation skills, because of their politeness characteristics promote professional and positive social interaction. In handling interpersonal dispute scenes with mediation, police officers/mediators provide a problem solving process in which they empower citizens. Through the transference of decision-making power, the officer is conveying deference and offering the self-responsibility and freedom that citizens rightfully expect to exercise in their lives.

This translates to police deference for members of a community participating in watching over their own community. For this reason, use of mediation by patrol officers should be seen as a requisite component of community policing initiatives. This makes sense since both seek to foster positive police-community relations, empower citizens, show deference

to citizens, and reduce confrontations between police officers and citizens.

Whether it is New York City or Kansas City, I believe that as we enter into a new millennium, police training needs to be taken to the next level. This means training police officers not just in mediation skills but certifying them as mediators. If a police department decides against having its officers trained as mediators, it should at least allow its officers to receive mediation skills training. Either way, the adaptation into patrol police work

of the conflict resolution methodology known as mediation can contribute to improved police-citizen interaction.

I use the word "contribute" rather than "change", since so many other changes are necessary (e.g., more police departments must become racially representative of the communities that they serve and racially-based profile stops must cease) for significant improvement to occur in American police-citizen interaction.

But dispute resolution training will be an important step in improving policing.

**CHRISTOPHER COOPER, Ph.D.**

Christopher Cooper is the Fulbright, Assistant Professor, Criminal Justice, Saint Xavier University

e-mail: [cooper@sxu.edu](mailto:cooper@sxu.edu)

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# chill out

## MEDIATION

**M**

murder  
minimum  
millennium  
mistreatment

community policing champions citizen empowerment. It attempts to do away with notions that the police are an occupying army and that citizens have little say in the policing of their communities.



# ripped off

**V** VALUES  
voice  
vendors  
violation



I always make the assumption that nobody is going to take something that doesn't belong to him or her. Although I know it doesn't really work that way, I feel it ought to. Maybe I'm too trusting, naïve, or maybe just totally stupid, but that's the way I am.

It was one of my first days working a new location. I'm a rookie vendor, and maybe not as streetwise as I ought to be, with a few habits that really don't work in today's world. One of those habits is to put something down somewhere, thinking I can go back to pick it up and it will still be there. I like to think that I'm simply a trusting soul who needs to believe in other people's basic honesty. Somehow, I always make the assumption that nobody is going to take something that doesn't belong to him or her. Although I know it doesn't really work that way, I feel it ought to. Maybe I'm too trusting, naïve, or maybe just totally stupid, but that's the way I am. That's why, in spite of my wishful thinking, I lock up my bike and my front door. Just common sense, right?

So why did common sense not prevail the day I left my pack unattended inside the front doors of the supermarket where I was vending the paper? The rea-

son I gave myself was that I didn't want it getting soaking wet in the rain, and I thought I had it where I could keep an eye on it.

It had to have happened in the last hour that I was there because the rain had tapered off when I took my last papers out of it and went back outside to sell them. It was during that time that once or twice I moved into a position that afforded a little shelter from the rain, but blocked my view of the doorway. Yet, it was the only way out of the store; everybody had to walk by me, so surely, I thought, I would have seen it leave. All I know is that I sold my last paper, walked into the store to the customer service desk and cashed in my change for something a little less bulky. I made my way back to the pay phone in the foyer to call my wife to tell her I was on the way home. I hung up the phone, and stared in disbelief at the vacant spot where my pack had been sitting. "There it was gone".

My first thought was that

some well-meaning person had picked it up and turned it over to the store staff for safekeeping. I really wanted to believe that, but my gut told me somebody had helped themselves to my belongings. All the delight in having a good day, all the good feelings about helping my family finances, all the encouragement I had felt about my new venture evaporated in a moment, washed away in the cold rain. How am I going to tell my wife, I thought, she's already upset with the amount of time it's taking me to make the little bit I bring in to plug the leaks in our budget. Between that sinking feeling of apprehension at the scene I was sure would follow when I gave her the bad news, and the sense of personal violation that I felt, I just avoided telling her. Instead, I dumped my bad feelings on everybody else, and we lost a really good evening.

There was very little of cash value in that bag, but there were personal things

that I can't replace. I can get a new hunting knife, a new hat, and some new head rags. I can buy another \$3.00 worth of little beads and needle and string. I can even rewrite most of my journals. In time I can even replace my trust in my fellow man because I still want to believe that people are as good as you give them the chance to be. I can even stop watching the faces that come through the doors of the supermarket and wonder "was it you?"

So why am I telling you all this?

Just to say to the thief, in a way you helped me, because I grew a little from this experience, and I won't make the same mistake again. So in a way you helped me, whether you meant to or not. But buddy, the next time you want to help somebody out, buy him a coffee, give him a smile, buy an Our Voice and keep your "cotton pickin'" fingers off his stuff!

DAVE FRIESEN



# poetry

he hears voices  
of saints and sinners

## HE HEARS VOICES

He hears voices  
of saints and sinners  
sometimes they call  
him a loser or winner  
he hears voices  
of God up above  
sometimes he hates  
sometimes he loves  
he hears voices  
of ones long departed  
sometimes it leaves  
him broken hearted  
he hears voices  
and they speak loud  
sometimes he feels  
as if his head's a crowd  
he hears voices  
often for a long time  
especially on Sunday  
when church bells chime  
he hears voices  
and that's his life  
he's tried to end  
his life with a knife  
he hears voices  
what more can he do  
funny thing is that man  
could be me or you.

## POEMS BY ERIC ANDERSON

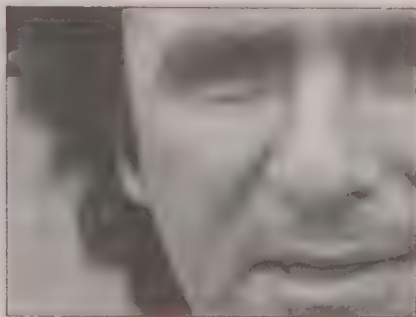


## AN ANONYMOUS MAN

An anonymous man  
died behind a liquor store  
the temperatures a cold  
and blustery -24  
his name was Lloyd  
his address was the street  
all his life he had  
been ostracized and beat  
they say he didn't  
have a fixed address  
they also say he was  
an alcoholic mess  
imagine in such a  
supposedly great city  
a dies alone  
we don't have any pity  
more like Lloyd  
today fall through the cracks  
oh the compassion that  
our affluent society lacks  
we don't want to lend  
any kind of helping hand  
to the suffering like Lloyd  
an anonymous man.







# the people's columnist

## bicyclists with big hearts

Bicyclists, of all ages, put their hearts and souls into the 1st Annual Becel Ride for Heart fundraiser. One hundred and five bicycling participants put their foot to the pedal, riding along an 18 km stretch along the North Saskatchewan river valley in Edmonton.

Registration for the ride commenced at 8:30 am. A warm up exercise for bicyclists consisting of 7 minutes was conducted by certified fitness instructor, Trish Borys, prior to the ride. The ride started at 10:00 am at Hawrelak Park, on Sunday, June 3rd, organized by the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Alberta. Two similar rides were held on the same date in Calgary and Lethbridge.

Every year for the past decade, Becel has been the leading supporter of health promotion initiatives of the Heart and Stroke Foundation. They are officially recognized as the National sponsor of the Becel Ride for Heart.

This year the Becel Ride for Heart raised over \$13,000 in pledges. The money will be offered to 66 research projects at both the University of Alberta and the University of Calgary. These programs will allow progress for many people suffering from heart and stroke disease.

Alex Stieda, a former professional cyclist, is the Becel Ride for Heart head spokesperson. He became a participant in the annual ride because of his father's tragic death after suffering a heart attack.

He says, "It really hits close to home. My father passed away of a heart attack when he was 49. It's a heart healthy lifestyle. That's something that really has kept me motivated for my whole life, even before my father passed away. You know it was always something important for me as a professional athlete. Now it's even more so. I mean I really see my kids growing. I want to be a grandfather for my kids growing. I want to be a grandfather for their kids, when they're older and have their own kids. My father wasn't around to be a grandfather for their kids."

A-Channel noontime news anchor and health reporter, Sarika Sehgal, believes everyone should come out to be a participant in this fundraiser.

She says, "I think a ride like this really raises awareness for everybody. This is a time for everybody to come out and think of a common goal here to raise money and funds and to stay healthy as well. To be out there riding is good for yourself and other people."

CISN Country radio personality Warren Berg is also a media spokesperson for the Becel Ride for Heart. He loves the idea of



speaking out against Canada's number one killer disease.

"I think it's very important to raise awareness about heart and stroke. It is the number one killer of men and women in Canada. This is the first ride of its kind in Edmonton. Hopefully, it will raise awareness and help raise some funds for a worthwhile cause."

Yolanda Creswell is married and a nurse by occupation. Yolanda and her husband Ken are first time participants of this year's ride. "I believe in the cause. I believe in raising money for good reasons."

Kathie Reith was a volunteer road marshal at this year's annual ride. She com-

mended the fundraisers for helping those suffering from heart and stroke disease. She says, "I think it's going to be really fun. I think it's a very good cause. It emphasizes fitness to people and it's also a way of making money to support the cause."

For more information on heart and stroke disease, contact President Sandra Thornton or Regional Manager Laverne Clark at the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Alberta. It's located at 10985 124 Street, Edmonton, Alberta, T5M 0H9. Office phone: 451-4545, Fax: 454-1593. Office hours: 8:30 am to 4:00 pm, Monday to Friday.

JOHN ZAPANTIS

## help me rhonda!

Well since she put me down I've been out doin' in my head  
Come in late at night and in the mornin' I just lay in bed

Well, Rhonda you look so fine (look so fine)  
And I know it wouldn't take much time  
For you to help me Rhonda  
Help me get her out of my heart

Help me Rhonda  
Help, help me Rhonda  
Help me Rhonda  
Help, help me Rhonda  
Help me Rhonda  
Help, help me Rhonda  
Help me Rhonda  
Help, help me Rhonda  
Help me Rhonda  
Help, help me Rhonda  
Help me Rhonda  
Help, help me Rhonda  
Help me Rhonda yeah  
Get her out of my heart

She was gonna be my wife  
And I was gonna be her man  
But she let another guy come between us  
And it ruined our plan

Well, Rhonda you caught my eye (caught my eye)  
And I can give you lotsa reasons why  
You gotta help me Rhonda  
Help me get her out of my heart...

BRIAN WILSON & MIKE LOVE



## dear rhonda

I'm fifteen years old. My dad beat me when I was a kid, and now he wants to get custody of me for the child tax credit. He says he has two kids to feed. He runs an escort service. My mom booted me out of the house. What should I do?

Kiwi

## dear kiwi

Write your social worker and tell her you're terrified of him, can't go up against him in court in case he knows bad people, and you're afraid he might try to turn you into an escort, too, because you're so pretty.

Also, girl, when we hang around with unfortunate people, sad, bad, jaded, cast-off, using types of people, we get pulled down, used up, and feeling like trash and nobody cares or has any honor. This is a bad thing. Please don't let this happen to you.

You have to learn to fight back for yourself, and not with physical violence. It's hard, and it hurts almost as if it were unnatural, but please learn. I did, and I can't say I'm sorry now. I prefer to use words spoken at normal

the mind can play tricks on you, building you a "house of cards," so you think, "aha!, I've got it together!", and then two days later, "WHAP"

range, or whisper gently, but I can pull out my Taekwondo scream and yell if I need it, just so I can stand my ground as I have earned.

Figure out what would make you happy to earn money. Ask in your heart and then head back to school or training. Social Services will help you. If we work with the system, it works.

Lastly, please always trust your heart. It doesn't know how to lie. The mind can play tricks on you, building you a "house of cards," so you think, "aha!, I've got it together!", and then two days later, "WHAP", we're down to square one again, "What do I do now?" There is always direction, if you sincerely ask for it.

Rhonda

have a question you can't answer or a problem you can't solve?

Write to Help Me Rhonda, c/o Our Voice. I'd love to help. Hope to hear from you soon! If you want my reply to your letter kept confidential





# com

citizen of  
the month



Angel McKay

**A**ngel McKay was born in Melville and moved to Edmonton in 1992. She has been here ever since. She is the mother of six adult children. For two years she worked for the Philia Family Services Group. She has served as the administrator for the REAP Society where she worked on human ecology. Other non-profit endeavors she has been involved in have

included a local CED network (a community garden network).

In a recent conversation with her over the phone Angel told me, "I spent most of my childhood years in Special-Ed due to a learning disability. Then I spent 20 years fighting the education system for the right to be educated. I entered university and got a certificate in the field of Social Work so

that I could help people like me get the same rights to education and employment. I have been lucky enough to find an employer who would take a chance on me despite my disabilities."

Best of luck Angel with your worthwhile struggle. May you achieve all the success possible.

CEC GARFIN

Every month, we will feature someone who has gone the extra mile in their life or in their career to make a difference in the lives of those who are less fortunate. The Citizen of the Month will receive a dinner for two courtesy of Cafe Mosaics on Whyte Avenue.

CITIZEN **C**  
cafe  
c.e.d  
career  
chance



Photo: John Zapantis

## healthy communities

"Not only is the t-shirt project going to appreciate volunteers, it is going to inspire community between people of different races, different classes, and different genders, in seeing that we have something in common."

**A**ction for Healthy Communities is a grassroots organization that promotes an array of health and wellness programs for inner city residents in 11 inner city communities in Edmonton.

The helpful organization offers facilitation and seed grant funding to a minimum of 3 to 6 inner city citizens who belong to a group project that comes up with a viable idea regarding health or wellness project in their communities.

The grassroots organization is a project of the Edmonton Health Care Citizen Society. Action for Healthy Communities was first established in 1995. The organization receives funding from sponsors.

Recently the organization approved a \$1000 grant to an inner-city citizens group project, The McCauley Pride Initiative, to produce a total of 400 McCauley Pride - Heart of the City t-shirts.

Some of the t-shirts will be given to schools at cost, but most will be given for free, especially to volunteers at inner-city agencies.

Others deserving of the free t-shirts could include bottle pickers who have been known to clean up the many inner-city back alleys of McCauley community, also people who help clean up the parks after community barbecues and those involved in the community clean-up.

The McCauley Pride Initiative initially came up with several logo ideas. Then they conducted a logo t-shirt survey, taking the variety of logos out to different restaurants, service stations and citizens on the streets of McCauley.

The McCauley Pride Initiative hopes to officially release 400 t-shirts for distribution by July 1st, for the as yet unconfirmed price of \$6 to \$7 dollars.

The McCauley Community League has already pre-purchased

100 of the t-shirts.

Mark Bubel, Community Animator of Action for Healthy Communities is more than pleased with the whole project. He feels that it will bring the Edmonton communities closer together. "Not only is the t-shirt project going to appreciate volunteers, it is going to inspire community between people of different races, different classes, and different genders, in seeing that we have something in common."

If you would like to learn more about the McCauley Pride t-shirts contact Mark Bubel, Community Animator, Action for Healthy Communities, located at 10844 - 97 Street, Edmonton, Alberta, T5H 2M3.

Phone: 944-4687, Fax: 944-4696.  
Email: action4@telusplanet.net  
Office hours 9:00 am to 5:00 pm, Monday to Friday.

JOHN ZAPANTIS





# marathon for charity

**M**ichael Kuss, the 31-year-old, Edmonton born, A-Channel weather-guy will be leaving Edmonton July 1, 2001 to water-ski the North Saskatchewan River and other waterways all the way to Lake Winnipeg! If conditions are right, he will then continue right on to Winnipeg. This endeavor will continue until the end of the July. Pledges will be collected and all the money raised will be given to the Bissell Centre

**OV>** Why did you decide to undertake this adventure?

**MK>** I love water-skiing and no one has done it before, expect for 2 others, one by small boat, another using a jet boat

**OV>** What is your average day, on the river?

**MK>** 8 hours on the river skiing 4-5 hours, at an average of 100 kms per day, with a total number of 20 days for the trip.

**OV>** What made you decide to support the Bissell?

**MK>** I live and work downtown, feel it is a worthy cause, and I heard that they had a financial shortfall earlier in the year, and thought it would be a perfect fit.

**OV>** How many individuals are accompanying you?

**MK>** There will be 2 or 3 following the route in a motorhome and 2 in the motorboat.

**OV>** How much do you hope to raise

and how do people go about making a pledge?

**MK>** The goal is at least \$10,000. People can make their pledges by calling the 24 hour number 441-6222, or they drop off their contribution at The Bissell Centre. Cheques should be made out to the Bissell Centre and are tax-deductible.

An hour before Michael starts out on July 1 the public is invited to a kickoff party at Government House Park on the hill below the Provincial Museum. There will be entertainment starting at 12 noon, as well pop, hotdogs and hamburgers available for purchase. All of the proceeds will go to the Bissell. Hope to see you there.

Information and questions may be directed to Ele Gibson at the Bissell Centre (423-2285).

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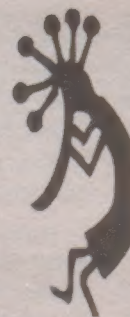
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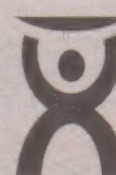
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# vom

vendor of the month

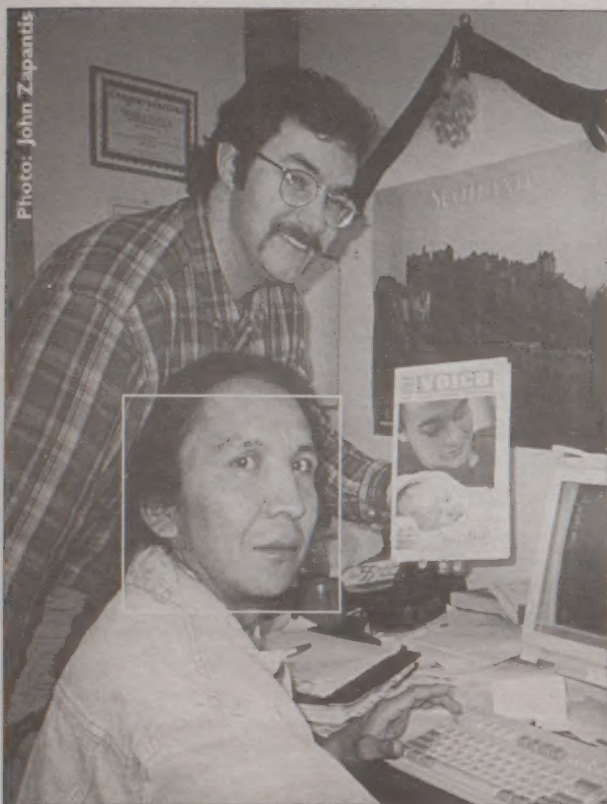


Photo: John Zapantis

**L**en Blackfox Martial, a Chippewan Native, is an example to many Our Voice vendors.

Recently Len successfully overcame a long-term alcohol addiction. He completed a treatment program at Poundmaker's on December 20, 2000.

He has certainly found his deserving place with the Our Voice Spare Change Magazine. He started vending the paper in October of 2000, and has been writing for the paper since January of 2001.

When Our Voice Distribution Manager Ron MacLellan is not in the distribution office, Len works relief by assisting with the responsibilities of signing up new vendors.

He also supplies them with papers, briefing them on Our Voice rules and regulations.

When Len is out vending, he loves the challenge of meeting the

public. "I like to meet people. I meet different people everyday. I get to meet all kinds of vendors. I have regular customers who go out of their way to see me."

Len has some kind words of advice to those particular passers-by who may have thoughts about putting vendors to the test.

"I'd just explain to them what I am doing, why I'm here, why I'm vending. It's a job. It's tough standing out there that's for sure. This paper is legitimate. We make money off of it. We have bills to pay. We have things to do. We're human beings just like everybody out on the streets."

Our productive vendor is motivated by the thought of loved ones when vending Our Voice. "I think about my family all the time, especially my wife and my kids. That's why I vend, so that I can feed them also."

JOHN ZAPANTIS

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Your money will go toward:

- ☐ Helping with the printing costs of **Our Voice**.
- ☐ Computer and writing training for our vendors.
- ☐ Continued support and empowerment services for vendors.



On Sunday, June 24th Change for Children's Painting Peace project unveiled the Edmonton Peace Mural. The three-part mural, installed on the west-side of the Salvation Army Building at 9618 - 101A Ave, is the last of three public murals to be painted by the project. Sister murals were created in Nicaragua and El Salvador in the summer of 2000.

Based on the six themes outlined in UNESCO's Manifesto 2000 for a Culture of Peace, the mural expresses both the local and global concerns of the youth involved with the project.

For more information about Change for Children, call 448-1507 or visit [www.changeforchildren.org](http://www.changeforchildren.org)



## edmonton peace mural > >

